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Republicans Blamed For Invitation Hoax

NASHVILLE (AP) — Official-appearing invitations have been sent for a bridal reception at Gov. Ray Blanton's mansion Tuesday night for James Earl Ray's new bride. If you received one, forget it.

Jim Gilchrist, press secretary for the Democratic governor, said Monday the whole thing is a Republican hoax. He didn't think it was particularly funny.

The invitations, printed on stationery bearing the state seal, printed obviously at great expense, read: "The governor and Mrs. Ray Blanton request the pleasure of your company at a bridal shower for Anna Sandhu Ray Tuesday, the seventh of November at eight o'clock, Curtiswood Lane."

The Rays were married Oct. 13 at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary at Petros, where Ray is serving a 99-year sentence for the April 4, 1968, slaying in Memphis of civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

Mrs. Ray, from Knoxville, has worked as a free-lance courtroom artist for television stations.

In a telephone interview, Gilchrist said, "Whoever sent the invitations was trying to get a laugh at the governor's expense on the day before the elections, knowing that the media would fall all over themselves to report it," Gilchrist said in a telephone interview. "I have no idea how many of the invitations were sent, but they apparently were directed at a pretty diverse group of people."

The matter is being investigated, Gilchrist said.